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Clarke

Sermon

on

Slavery in the U. S.

Nov. 24, 1842

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SLAVERY IN THE UNITED STATES.

A

SERMON

DELIVERED IN AMORY HALL,

ON

THANKSGIVING DAY,

NOVEMBER 24, 1842.

BY JAMES FREEMAN CLARKE

[PRINTED BY FRIENDS FOR GRATUITOUS DISTRIBUTION.]

BOSTON:
BENJAMIN H. GREENE.
1843.

JOHN PUTNAM, PRINTER.

SERMON.

HEBREWS 13:3.

"Remember them that are in bonds as bound with them."

I TAKE for the subject of my discourse to-day an important matter, and one concerning which I have not before spoken to you, and one which I think should be sometimes treated, namely,

"Slavery in the United States. Its evils. Its sinfulness. Our duties concerning it."

"But what has this to do with thanksgiving?" you will say. Perhaps it may be a good way of thanking God for the mercies he has bestowed upon us, to remember those to whom they are denied. We may thank God in various ways, and not merely by recounting his mercies, and glorifying his goodness to ourselves. "Herein is my Father glorified that ye *bear much fruit.*" The most acceptable fruit to God, is love to our brethren; the most genuine form which gratitude to God can take is a deep sympathy with all God's creatures; the surest way of proving that we recognize thankfully the blessing of Christianity, is to show that we have received its spirit,—a spirit which binds us in brotherhood with all men, whether Jew or Samaritan, bond or free.

"*But what good will it do to consider this subject at*

all?" you may say, "*we can do nothing to remove the evils of slavery.*" I shall show, by and by, that we can do something; but supposing that we cannot, still it may do *us* good to consider the subject. Will it do no good to learn to feel an interest in the sufferings of others who are at a distance from us? Will it do no good to extend our sympathies beyond "the little limits of our own State and neighborhood"? * Will it do no good to look at great moral questions,—questions of right and wrong, toward which the intellect of the World is turning its attention? And ought we to decide, before we have inquired, whether we certainly can do no good? whether we certainly have no share in the sin? It will not do, when we stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, to say that two millions of our fellow beings were under a hard yoke, under a system of government which we were supporting, under laws which we were enacting, and that we would not so much as ask whether we could do any thing to abate the evil,—would not so much as listen to any statement concerning it. Will it do to say then, that it was an exciting subject,—one which the majority of the respectable citizens disliked to hear mentioned,—that the agitation of it might disturb our political, ecclesiastical, or social organizations?

I do not sympathize with those who are for introducing this or the like topics on all occasions. But on this day, in which the State has invited us to meet together, it seems not inappropriate to speak of moral questions in which the State is largely concerned. I feel somewhat qualified to speak of it,—if a seven years' residence in a slave-holding community can entitle one to claim some acquaintance with the facts,—if an intimate friendship with many slaveholders, and many obligations

* Daniel Webster.

and kindnesses received at their hands, can vindicate one from any prejudice against the men,—and if a New England love for freedom, breathed in with her air in childhood, confirmed in youth, and I thank God never relinquished amid other influences in manhood, can prevent me from having imbibed an undue partiality for the system. Another motive has influenced me, also, in selecting this subject to-day. Speaking of Dr. Channing, a few weeks ago, I said that we ought to honor him as he would wish, by increasing our efforts in behalf of those truths and objects for which he labored, so that as far as possible his absence might be supplied. As far as possible, for if all his numerous friends; if all of us who, since his departure, have felt it our duty publicly to express our respect and gratitude for his talents and virtues; if all were to combine their efforts in behalf of any one of these objects, I doubt if all together could do as much as he singly, so vast is the energy which belongs to the individual mind. But the cause of the slave is one of those objects, and I wish to do my part of that work, which *he* would have continued to do had he been continued among us.

I. Let us look, then, in the first place, at *the evils* of the system of slavery.

In speaking of these evils, I desire not to exaggerate them. They have sometimes, I think, been exaggerated,—or at least the attention has been called so much to particular evils, that the mind has been filled full of them, and they have assumed a preposterous magnitude in the imagination. People have imagined that the slaves were being whipped and worked all the time, that they were dripping with blood, that their misery was constant and universal. Going to the South with these ideas in their heads, and perhaps staying there for months without

hearing the sound of a lash,—seeing the slaves very merry, and often having enough to eat and very little to do, they have come back from their trip to the Virginia Springs or the Mammoth cave, and said that slavery was not so very bad a system after all,—that the evils of it had been exaggerated. Yet the *real* evils of slavery never have been, and hardly can be exaggerated. Some circumstances about it may be. There are many very kind masters, —very many. As far as I have seen, the fault was that the blacks had too little rather than too much to do. In the cities this is certainly the case, for they have too much time left for dissipation and bad company. There are also many pleasing features connected with the system. God has given alleviations and compensations to the worst institutions. There is often a strong attachment between the master and servant, very different from the mercenary relation which exists so much among ourselves between employer and domestic. The white child and black grow up together,—they play together on the floor when children, and as they grow up, the one feels the responsibility of a protector, and the other the affection which comes from respect and reliance. Reliance and respect are native to the African character, and they make a relation tolerable to him, that to a differently organized character,—the Indian, for example,— would be worse than death. These and other alleviations belong to this institution, and they ought to be mentioned. Evils, sufficiently enormous remain, after all such abatements.

1. First the evils to the slave are very great. He is not always treated badly, but he is always *liable* to be so treated. He is entirely at the mercy of his master. If his master is passionate, arbitrary, despotical, avaricious, he is liable to be beaten, starved, over-worked, and separated from his family ; and whoever knows human nature,

knows that such cases will not be rare. Let me describe the character of two planters, whose estates adjoined. The first was one of the best men I ever knew, and one of the best friends I ever had. He owned some sixty-five slaves. He governed them as children, with mingled firmness and kindness. He visited them constantly in their houses, to be sure that they were always comfortable. They had neat houses, plenty to eat and to wear. They earned by extra work, for which he paid them, sometimes half a dollar, sometimes a dollar a day, which they spent as they chose. I have known him sit half the day holding in his lap the head of an old sick negro, who would not let any one but his old master come near him, nor take medicine but from his hand. This planter's wife and children were like him, indefatigable in their care of the servants. No servant was ever sold except for behavior which rendered it impossible for him to be retained. Once this happened, and then the whole household was filled with gloom, as if one of the children had been taken away. Yet kind and wise as were this family in their management of their servants, they all confessed that the system was bad, and that while men were kept in slavery, it was impossible for them to be made really happy.

Let us now look into the adjoining plantation. Here lived a man who had been a trader in slaves,—buying them in Virginia, and carrying them down the river to Mississippi. He had a favorite servant, named Daniel, whom he used to employ to persuade the slaves whom he wished to buy, that they would have more to eat and less to do where the trader was going to take them. So they would ask their masters to sell them, and the masters, who would often refuse to sell their servants against their will, would be glad to get the advanced price which the trader offered, if the men themselves were willing to

go. Daniel saved his master's life twice; once from a gang of slaves whom he was taking chained South, who broke their chain in the night, and were about to kill him; another time when the steamer Tennessee was wrecked in the Mississippi, and Daniel took off his master in a skiff. Yet after all this he sold Daniel too to a sugar-planter. This man left some twenty slaves, and before he died, being smitten with compunctions of conscience, left them their freedom, on condition that they should not be set free till each had been in his possession fifteen years. His executor, who was as bad a man as himself, contrived that of the whole only two actually became free. The rest were sold down the river before the time came. Who was to take the trouble to inquire into it? One of them was to be free in a year, and was to be married to a free colored woman. He determined to escape or die, and was shot trying to get away at a wood-landing.

I could tell you stories of barbarities which I knew of, which it would sicken you to hear, as it does me to think of them. But it would give you a false impression. It would be as if I should collect all the accounts of murders and other atrocities committed in this city during ten years, and present them as a specimen of its character. It is enough to know, that when men are trusted with irresponsible power they will often abuse it.

A worse evil to the slave than the cruelties he sometimes endures, is the moral degradation which results from his condition. Falsehood, theft, licentiousness, are the natural consequences of his situation. He steals,—why should he not?—he cannot, except occasionally, earn money; why should not he steal it? He lies,—it is the natural weapon of weakness against tyrant strength. He goes to excess in eating and drinking and animal pleasures,—for he has no access to any higher pleasures.

And a man cannot be an animal without sinking below an animal,—a brutal man is worse than a brute. An animal cannot be more savage or more greedy than the law of his nature allows. But there seems to be no limit to the degradation of a man. Slavery is the parent of vices ; it always has been, and always will be. Cowardice and cruelty, cunning and stupidity, abject submission and deadly vindictiveness, are now as they always have been, the fruits of slavery.

I do not mean that there are no exceptions. There are pure, honest, and virtuous slaves. There are truly and tenderly pious slaves. I have sat in their churches, and been deeply touched by their devotion. God does not leave himself without a witness anywhere in the soul of man. I have observed with awe and joy the same evidences of a profound Christian experience in these downcast souls, trodden under feet of men,—the same experiences which we see described in the epistles of Paul, the confessions of Augustine, the journals of Wesley, Fenelon, and Fox.

Masters often can and do preserve their slaves from great immorality by careful superintendence,—but there is one evil so inherent in the system, that no care can obviate it. The slave's nature never *grows*. The slave is always a child. God has made Progress and Freedom inseparable. You are astonished, when you first go to the South, to hear a grey-headed black man called *boy*, but there is a propriety, though unintended, in the term ; they *are* boys always. What is it which turns the white child into a man, but the necessity of looking forward, of preparing *now* for the future ? But the slave has no motive to look forward. He has nothing to hope, nothing to fear beyond the present day. If he should be ever so industrious, diligent, skilful, and faithful, he would gain nothing by it,—he would only be worth so much more to

his master. If he should be ever so lazy, stupid, or unfaithful, he loses nothing by it. He must still be fed and clothed. His only ambition, then, is to do as little work as possible to-day, and to get as much rest, food and sleep as he can. Tomorrow may take care of itself.

The system of slavery, then, is a soul-destroying system. Perhaps some of you have seen the drawings illlustrating one of Schiller's ballads, representing Apollo's horse Pegasus, sold to a farmer, and having had his wings tied together, and his spirit subdued by beating and starvation, at last he is yoked with an ox into a plough, and sinks exhausted on the ground. It is full of pathos,—but what a poor emblem of the human soul, when by means of slavery, its aspirations are checked, and it becomes a mere mechanical principle of life, informing a brute body.

2. I have spoken of a few of the evils of the system of slavery to the slave himself. The evils to his master are, perhaps, nearly as great. This is admitted by intelligent slaveholders. It was admitted by Mr. Clay, when he said in a speech at Lexington, before he became the champion of the institution,—"that he considered the system as a curse to the master as well as a bitter wrong to the slave, and to be justified only by an urgent political necessity." It is an evil to the slaveholder every way. It impoverishes him. Slave cultivation destroys the value of the soil,—manufactures cannot thrive where slavery exists,—the energy is taken out of the community by it. It depopulates a country. Kentucky has greater advantages than Ohio. It was settled fifteen years before her,—it is surrounded and cleft with navigable streams,—it lies under a warmer sun,—it is larger, and has as much or more good soil,—it is rich in minerals; and yet the population of Ohio was about double that of Kentucky in 1840. Slavery is a domestic evil. There is no com-

fort, no cleanliness, no improvement with slaves in your family. It is a perpetual annoyance and vexation. Society is poisoned in its roots by this system. The spirit, tone, and aim of society is incurably bad, wherever slavery is. There are noble exceptions to this, but they are exceptions. Public education is out of the question in slave States,—common schools cannot exist except in cities. It has been tried again and again, always unsuccessfully.

With the bloody affrays which are constantly occurring in the slave States, we are all familiar. There no white man is ever punished for shooting or stabbing his enemy in the street. According to Southern law, to go up to a man in the high-way, abuse him till he is provoked to make some violent reply, and then to draw a knife and cut him down, is self-defence. In the city where I lived, three Mississippi gentlemen, one a judge, attacked three unarmed mechanics, who had offended them, in a public bar-room, with dirks and bowie knives. Two of the mechanics were killed, one by the judge, in the following manner. The judge was entering the bar-room, and saw his brother struggling with an opponent. He drew his bowie knife, and flourishing it in the air, rushed across the room and thrust it in the back of a man who was pulling another away from the affray. The judge was tried, defended on the ground of self-defence by a distinguished member of Congress from Mississippi, and acquitted.

From the speech of the prosecuting officer, an old and distinguished Kentuckian, I quote the following testimony to the different habits of the South and North.*

"If you go into the Northern States, it is a rare thing if you can find a man in ten thousand with concealed

* Speech of Ben Hardin at the trial of Wilkinson, &c.

weapons on his person. Go South, to Arkansas or Mississippi, for example, and though you would be a peaceable man at the North, in these States you may arm yourself to the teeth, and track your steps in blood with impunity. I went down the river lately, and it was pointed out to me where the Black Hawk had blown up and killed her scores; to another place where the Gen. Brown had blown up and killed her hundreds; to one spot on the shore where two gentlemen blew out each other's brains with rifles; to another where the widow somebody's overseer was butchered; to another where the keeper of a wood-yard was shot for asking pay for his wood; to another where an aged gentleman was stabbed for protecting his slave from cruel treatment. Great God! cried I, at last,—take me back, take me back to where there is more law, if less money,—for I could not bear the horrid recital any longer,—when every jutting-point or retiring bend bore the landmark of assassination and irresponsible murder."

This is the testimony of a distinguished and patriotic Southerner.

The cause of this is obvious,—habits of dictation and violence, formed among slaves, cause these affrays among masters.

The political evils of slavery form a distinct and important part of the argument,—but I cannot stop to dwell on them. I refer you to the speeches of John Quincy Adams, that noble old man, who has stood up alone in manly opposition to the encroachments of slavery, and borne the tumultuous and furious denunciations of its champions, when no Northern man had the courage to take a stand by his side. "Unshaken, unseduced, unterrified," he stood like the mountain, round which cluster and darken the black clouds, and against whose summit they discharge fire and hail, but which emerges from the tu-

mult serene and calm, while the broken, baffled wreaths of mist are driven down the wind. I cannot dwell on the dangers to the Union from the encroachments of slavery, but its machinations are untiring, its jealousy sleepless. It is still determined to annex Texas to the Union. It has occupied the President's chair, the Speaker's seat in the House, it insists on having a majority of judges of the Supreme Court, and, contrary to all law, on the last day of the last session it forced a bill through Congress, making the nation pay the expenses of those Americans who were taken prisoners by the Mexicans, in an expedition to Santa Fe.*

II. Let us now examine the question of the *sinfulness* of slavery.

There are two theories on this subject which I think extreme,—one, of the Abolitionists who demand immediate emancipation,—the other, of the South Carolina party of slaveholders.

The first theory declares that to hold slaves, or to have anything to do with holding slaves, is always sinful, and to be repented of immediately,—that no slaveholder should be permitted to commune in our churches, and that we should come out and be separate from this unclean thing as far as possible. They support this theory by the inconsistency of slavery with the rights of man and the spirit of the gospel.

The other party, among whom, I am sorry to say, are to be found ministers of the gospel at the South and North, professors of moral philosophy in Southern colleges, and distinguished citizens of the free States, declare slavery to be a system which is sanctioned by the Bible, has existed in all times, and is necessary to the

* See J. Q. Adams's Speech, at Weymouth, to his constituents, 1842.

progress of the world in freedom and happiness. They speak much of the patriarchs of the Old Testament, and of the fact that while slavery, in atrocious forms, existed in the times of Christ and his Apostles, neither Jesus nor his Apostles were abolitionists, or rebuked it, but instead of commanding the masters to emancipate their slaves, or the slaves to run away, told the masters to be just and kind, and the slaves to be obedient and faithful in the relation.

The answer of the Abolitionists to this is not satisfactory, because they wish to prove too much,—they deny that slavery did exist under Mosaic institutions; and they accuse their opponents of "torturing the pages of the blessed Bible."*

Now the true doctrine, I think, is, that slavery as a system is thoroughly sinful and bad,—but it does not follow that every slaveholder commits sin in holding slaves. That the whole spirit of the gospel is opposed to slavery, and that the tendency of Christianity is to break every yoke, is perfectly plain. But the fact, which always remains a fact, that Jesus and his Apostles did not attempt violently to overthrow and uproot this institution, did not denounce all slaveholders, and that while we have catalogues of sins which are to be repented and forsaken, slaveholding is not among them, shows that, under all circumstances, it is not sinful. This is also evident from fact. Here is a young man who inherits a hundred slaves from his father; some are good, some bad; some are industrious, some idle; some young, some old,—shall he tell them they are free, and let them go? Some could do well, but others not,—they are too old, or too idle, or too vicious,—they have been made so by slavery,

* See Weld's "Bible Argument."

and it is the duty of the slaveholder to keep them and take care of them, till they can be prepared for freedom.

But what shall we say of those who attempt to justify the system, and would have us believe, that because Jesus did not denounce it he approved of it,—that God ordained and Jesus approved a system that turns man into a brute,—degrades the soul, and makes it almost incapable of progress,—a system, then, which allowed the master to crucify his slave, and throw him into a fish-pond, to be eaten by carp, for breaking a glass dish,—that Jesus, who taught that we are to love our brethren as ourselves, did not disapprove of this system, or think it sinful? It was my hard lot, at the South, to hold a controversy in the newspapers with a man who held this doctrine. He maintained, also, that what was not forbidden was commanded; and that it was, therefore, a Christian duty to hold slaves; and that it was a covenant blessing and privilege, granted by God to the Jews, to have the power of beating their servants to death, provided they did not die immediately.*

III. I must now say something on the third point,—*What are our duties in relation to slavery?*

And here I must notice some objections made by those who think we have no duties in the premises.

Objection 1. "*We ought to let the whole matter alone. We have nothing to do with it. It is a Southern matter, and should be left exclusively to the South.*"

I think we have a good deal to do with it. We support slavery directly in the District of Columbia, and indirectly throughout the Union. Our Congress, composed in part of those whom we elect, and who are our

* Dr. J. N. McDowell's Letters to J. F. Clarke, in the St. Louis Bulletin.

representatives, has power to make all laws for the District of Columbia. Now the North should insist, either that slavery should be done away with there, or that the seat of government should be removed to some State where slavery does not exist. I am disposed to think that Congress would do wrong in doing away with slavery in the District without the consent of the inhabitants. But it has a right to say to them,—"Consent to emancipate, or we leave you." And if this alternative were proposed, there is little doubt but that they would consent.

We have a good deal to do with slavery. We support it indirectly throughout the South. It is the strength of the Union which supports slavery, not the strength of the South. It is the power of the free States which upholds this system. If the Union between the free and slave States were dissolved, slavery could not last ten years. This is a thesis easy to prove, though I have no room here to argue it.

Again, by the clause in the Constitution which declares that the slave, escaping North, shall be given up to his Southern master, Massachusetts becomes a hunting-ground for the South. She is not wholly a free State,—not so free as Canada. The soil of Canada cannot tolerate the presence of a slave; the soil of New England can. The Southern bondman, flying North, and entering the limits of New England, is still a bondman. When he has passed through New England and crossed the Canada boundary, he has ceased to be a slave. His chains have fallen off from him. Slavery, then, can and does exist on our soil. So long as this compact exists let us not nullify it. I abhor nullification under all its forms. Were we indeed to pass laws forbidding an escaped slave to be given up, we should no more nullify the Constitution than several Southern States have done,

in passing laws by which a free colored citizen of the North, entering their borders, becomes thereby liable to be imprisoned and to be sold into perpetual slavery.* For the same section and article which requires bondmen to be given up to their owners, declares that "the citizens of each State shall be entitled to all privileges and immunities of citizens in the several States."† Nevertheless, we are not to infringe the Constitution because the South infringes it. But have we nothing to do with slavery, while these laws remain? We ought not to cease our efforts, wisely and earnestly conducted, for the abolition of slavery, till it can be said of New England, as it could long ago be said of Old England, that a slave's foot cannot tread her soil, a slave's breath taint her air. "No matter in what language his doom may have been pronounced, no matter what complexion incompatible with freedom, an Indian or African sun may have burned upon him. The moment his foot touches the sacred soil of Britain, the altar and the god sink together in the dust. His soul walks abroad in her original majesty. His body swells beyond the reach of the chains which fall from around him, and he stands redeemed, regenerated, and disenthralled by the irresistible spirit of Universal Emancipation."‡

But we ought to take higher ground. Have we nothing to do with slavery? Are we, then, Christians? Is not our neighbor the suffering man, at the pole or beneath the equator? Ought we not to love him as ourselves. Shall Mason and Dixon's line be an insurmountable barrier to our Christian sympathies? Shall we send missionaries to Africa or India, and help to Poland and

* Laws of South Carolina and Louisiana; perhaps others.

† Constitution of the United States, Art. IV, sect. 2.

‡ Curran.

Greece, and think nothing of the poor slave in Georgia and Missouri? Or is political freedom so much more valuable a possession than personal, that it becomes a duty to interfere on behalf of a nation which is taxed without being represented, but criminal to interfere on behalf of a *man*, who is made a chattel, and despoiled of all his rights?

Objection 2. "*But you can do nothing. The North cannot do anything for the slave. We cannot approach him. And if we could, the system is too deeply rooted, and too extensive to be overthrown by human efforts. We must leave it to the Providence of God.*"

The system of slavery is a deep-rooted and widely-spread system, but if this is an argument for not opposing it, it is one which would have prevented every great reform which has ever taken place from being attempted. The British slave trade was a deeply-rooted and wide-spread system, and resisted for years the efforts of those who contended against it. But it was at last overthrown. The Roman Catholic church was wide spread and deeply rooted when Luther seceded from it. But the Reformation has shorn it of its strength. Once all Europe held slaves; but now slavery is almost extinct on its soil. Paganism and Judaism were deeply-rooted and wide-spread systems when the Apostles began to preach a Master who had been publicly executed by a felon's death. But in less than three hundred years a Christian emperor sat on the throne of the world.

When we consider slavery as a whole, and think that there are two millions and a half of slaves, valued at twelve hundred millions of dollars, in the United States, and that twelve states are slaveholding, the evil seems very great, and it seems almost in vain to attempt opposing it. But when we look at it in detail, many circum-

stances appear of an encouraging nature. Some of them are as follows.

1. By accurate calculations it appears that there are not more than 200,000 slaveholders in the United States. That is, not more than 1 in 12 of the free inhabitants of the slave states is a slaveholder. In some states not more than one in three of the legal voters is a slaveholder. Non-slaveholders in the South, must, from their very position, be opposed to slavery. Slavery constitutes an aristocracy from which they are excluded. Farmers or mechanics, who do not own slaves, are thus the natural enemies of the system. This is particularly the case wherever slaves are taught the mechanic arts, and thus come in competition with the free laborers. From these causes there is a strong under current of opposition to the system throughout the South. It is seldom heard of, because the organs of expression are in the hands of the slaveholders. These are rich, have leisure, are united by a common interest, and can devote themselves to strengthening their position, and opposing all utterance of anti-slavery sentiments. But their real weakness is better understood at the South, than it is here.

2. There are many regions of the South where slavery hardly exists. Throughout the extensive mountain region, which stretches through the middle of Virginia, through North and South Carolina, and into Georgia, there are comparatively few slaves. The mountains are always the home of freedom. East Tennessee has so few slaves, that attempts have been made to constitute a free state out of her.

3. The last census shows that slavery is steadily diminishing in the Northern slave states, that is, in Mary-

land, Virginia, Kentucky, North Carolina and Missouri. The natural course of things is driving slavery South.

4. There is every probability that in a few years Kentucky, Maryland and Virginia will emancipate their slaves and secede from the ranks of slavery. I have heard the most distinguished men in Kentucky say that when a convention is called in that state to alter the constitution, slavery is gone. I have heard them say that when that time comes they will take the stump through the state to argue against the system. Of this disposition in Kentucky the South Carolina school, who contend for the perpetuity of slavery, are well aware, and have repeatedly endeavored to bend the state to Southern interests. This was undoubtedly one object of the Charleston and Ohio railroad, which failed; of the railroad Bank, which was to be established in Kentucky, with directors in South Carolina, and which could not obtain a charter from the Kentucky legislature, notwithstanding the most strenuous efforts. This was the object of the desperate struggle made a year or two since to induce the Kentucky legislature to repeal the law prohibiting the importation of slaves for sale into the state, a struggle which was also unsuccessful, and during which, speeches were made, and pamphlets published by T. F. Marshall, Cassius M. Clay, Robert I. Breckenridge and others, which breathed a Northern spirit of freedom.

These, and other facts, show that there are natural causes at work, under Providence, which indicate very certainly that slavery in the United States must terminate sooner or later. But they do not authorize us to say that its termination may be left to be brought about by these influences, and that therefore we need do nothing. For there will always be a determined opposition made to every movement towards emancipation in the South,

and to resist this, moral convictions are needed, and the influence of a sound public opinion at the North. Much can, and must be done by the friends of freedom everywhere to pour light into the intricacies of this subject, and to awaken the moral sentiment concerning it. And however we may differ from some of the sentiments and some parts of the course pursued by abolitionists, they deserve the credit of having been the first effectually to call the public mind to the earnest consideration of this great subject.

Objection 3. "*But the blacks cannot take care of themselves.*"

Many of them cannot, and such ought not to be immediately emancipated. But that the majority cannot, or that a very large minority cannot, is not correct. The following facts are evidence enough of this. In all the southern cities, there are a large proportion of slaves who hire their own time from their masters, i. e. *hire themselves*, and pay so much a week. The women pay from one to two dollars a week, which they earn by washing, and in other ways; the men from two to three dollars a week, which they earn by driving carriages, and drays, and like employments. Now if a slave can support himself, when he has to pay so much to his master, (for they support themselves beside), it is clear that he can support himself where he has *not* to pay this. Nor are these chosen or selected servants, but merely those whose masters happen to live in the city.

Objection 4. "*They do not wish to be free. They are very happy as they are.*"

So they are, sometimes. Undoubtedly they are often satisfied with their lot. But not generally. I have generally found, on conversing with them, a strong desire for

freedom deeply seated in their breasts. If they do not desire freedom, why are the southern newspapers constantly filled with advertisements of runaway negroes, and constantly decorated with a series of embellishments representing a black man, with a bundle on his shoulder, running? Why these rigorous laws against every ship and captain who shall assist a slave in escaping? Why all this jealousy of the abolitionists? The slaves do ardently desire freedom—they would not be men did they not. They have, to be sure, vague ideas of what it is. Many are disappointed with it when they get it. But on the whole they would be much happier as freemen than they can be as slaves. They would have to work harder and fare more poorly perhaps than they do now; but what then? they would be working for themselves and for their children, and hope would lighten their toil, and a sense of independence strengthen them in their labor.

Objection 5. "*But they are not intended to be free. They are an inferior race.*"

I shall not soon forget the answer once made to this suggestion by a Kentuckian. I was once visited, when I resided in Louisville, by a young man from Boston who had been bred up here under highly conservative influences, and who thought slavery an excellent institution, and all kinds of anti-slavery movements terrible fanaticisms. We took a ride together in the country. The first place where we stopped, he entered into conversation with the lady of the house, a woman of remarkable talents, and possessing the fluency and readiness native to Kentuckians. Being among slaveholders my friend thought it a good time to bring out his pro-slavery sentiments. But he was soon interrupted: "We cannot agree with you," said the lady; "it will not do for you to attempt to persuade us of the advantages of slavery. Our family

on both sides are all abolitionists. Anti-slavery sentiments are not new with the M.'s and B.'s." After this we rode on and came to the farm of the gentleman of whom I spoke before. My Boston friend thought he could not be so unlucky a second time, especially as he saw clusters of negro houses as we rode up the long avenue which led to the house. So in conversation he presently began to say that "slavery was not so bad a thing as it was represented at the North." "Perhaps not," replied the slaveholder, "but we find it *bad enough*." "But at any rate," continued the Northerner, "the blacks are not fit to be free. They have not intelligence enough to bear freedom. They are an inferior race." "My friend," replied the Kentuckian, "I could select from the men on my farm, *seven*, each of whom would do to go to the Kentucky legislature, and each of them has as much sense and knowledge as the majority of the representatives there."

I felt ashamed of my Massachusetts friend, and proud of my Kentucky friend. For it is perhaps natural, certainly excusable, for one born at the South to be blind to the evils of the system, though it is noble when he rises above the influences of his situation, and is willing to acknowledge them. But it always seemed to me the part of a traitor, for a Northerner to become their apologist. I can excuse a Southerner who defends this system, though I reverence and love him if he has moral strength enough to see its evils, and the moral courage to confess its injustice. But false in heart, and mean in soul must be the man, who, having trod in childhood and youth the free soil of the North, afterward becomes at the South the defender of slavery.

It is a mistake to speak of the African as an inferior race to the Caucasian. It is doubtless *different* from this, just as this is also different from the Malay,

the Indian, the Mongolian. There are many varieties in the human family. The Englishman, Welshman, Scotchman and Irishman are organically different—so are the Pawnee, the Mandan and the Winnebago Indians. But it will not do to say *now* that the African is inferior—he never has been tried. In some faculties he probably *is* inferior—in others probably superior. The colored man has not so much invention as the white, but more imitation. He has not so much of the reflective, but more of the perceptive powers. The black child will learn to read and write as fast or faster than the white child, having equal advantages. The blacks have not the indomitable perseverance and will, which make the Caucasian, at least the Saxon portion of it, *masters* wherever they go—but they have a native courtesy, a civility like that from which the word "gentleman" has its etymological meaning, and a capacity for the highest refinement of character. More than all, they have almost universally, a strong religious tendency, and that strength of attachment which is capable of any kind of self-denial, and self-sacrifice. Is this an inferior race—so inferior as to be only fit for chains?

What then is our duty? We ought to remember the bond as bound with them. In our thoughts and our prayers remember them. We ought to make our legislators and those who wish for office remember them. We ought to spread the conviction that public men, if they would gain the favor of the community, must rise above mere party questions, and look at the moral bearings and influences of measures. We should make those whom we send to Congress feel that if they suffer the encroachments of slave power, that if they do not manfully uphold the rights of the North, we shall hold them faithless and recreant, unworthy to have been born on the hills of New England. We ought to watch them.

We leave these matters too much to a few professed party politicians.

What is needed more than anything else now, on this, and many other subjects, is a class of *independent* men—who will not go all lengths with any party—who will govern themselves by conscience—who will not join the abolitionists in their denunciations and their violence, nor join the South in their defence of slavery—who can be temperate without being indifferent—who can be moderate and zealous also—who can make *themselves felt* as a third power, holding the balance between violent parties, and compelling both to greater moderation and justice. We can each of us, in our own private and humble sphere, inform ourselves on this and the like great questions, endeavor to inform others, and so create by degrees that mighty power,—a sound and just public opinion, before which every abuse must at last go down. We can be willing to hear, to judge, to think. We can avoid the fanaticism of the North and of the South. We can oppose to the violence and passion of southern blood, the sterner and more awful face of conscience. We can rebuke every man who truckles or bows to slavery, or who voluntarily offers himself as its instrument—rebuke him by refusing him our countenance or support as long as he shows this disposition. Finally, feeling that the Lord reigns, and that no evil can triumph forever, we can calmly look to him for aid, and rely on his Providence, yet doing ourselves also, whatever our hand finds to do—working while the day lasts, knowing that the night cometh when no man can work.

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